

Senate Rules Committee Hearing
Sen. Richard J. Durbin
February 11, 2014

**“Bipartisan Support for Improving U.S. Elections: An Overview from the
Presidential Commission on Election Administration”**

As he addressed the nation on Election Night in 2012, President Obama thanked those who waited hours in line to vote and declared, “we have to fix that.”

Studies of the 2012 election indicate that more than 5 million people waited an hour or more to vote. President Obama is right. Waiting hours to vote is simply unacceptable in the United States of America. That’s why I am pleased that he created the Commission that is delivering their report and testifying before the committee today.

The opportunity to vote is one of the most important rights we have as American citizens. In fact, voting is “the right preservative of all other rights.” Our access to the ballot box is so important that the Constitution has been amended six times to expand and protect the right to vote, more than any other issue. These six Constitutional Amendments—the fifteenth, seventeenth, nineteenth, twenty-third, twenty-fourth, and twenty-sixth—ratified over the course of 100 years underscore our nation’s commitment to ensuring that all adult citizens enjoy free and full access to the ballot.

As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights, I have held a series of hearings on voting rights. From those hearings, one thing is abundantly clear: protecting the right of every citizen to vote is not a Democratic or Republican value, it is an American value. That’s why it’s so important to ensure that every citizen can vote without unnecessary burdens or delays – like ridiculously long lines.

For that reason, I would like to extend my thanks to the Chairmen of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration, Bob Bauer and Ben Ginsberg, for their fine work leading this bipartisan effort to find a solution to some of the challenges that faces voters on Election Day.

The Commission’s report, “The American Voting Experience: Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration,”

provides a blueprint for the more than 8,000 state and local jurisdictions that administer elections to improve the voting experience for American voters.

After deliberating for six months and hearing from experts and stakeholders from across the country, the Commission has issued its findings, identifying best practices in election administration and making recommendations to improve the voting experience.

I look forward to working with my colleagues at the federal, state, and local level to advance the Commission's key recommendations, which include:

- Modernizing the registration process through the expansion of online voter registration;
- Improving access to polling places through the expansion of early voting;
- Increasing the selection of suitable, well-equipped, and accessible polling place facilities, such as schools;
- Encouraging widespread adoption of state-of-the-art techniques to assure efficient management of polling places and efficient allocation of polling place resources; and
- Promptly addressing the impending crisis and technological challenges presented by the soon-to-be obsolete voting machines we use today.

I urge state and local officials to adopt these and other recommendations from the Commission's unanimous, bipartisan report.

As the Commission's well documented report indicates, adopting these recommendations will reduce lines, improve accuracy, increase efficiency, and enhance the voting experience overall.

We live in the greatest democracy on this earth. It's time that we administered our elections in a way that lives up to that standard.

I look forward to the discussion today, as we work to ensure that all Americans can vote their conscience without having to spend hours waiting in line to do so.